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December 4, 2012

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## **Navajo Nation leadership discusses LCR settlement with Arizona state parties, discussions at an impasse**

Phoenix, Ariz. – The Naa’bik’iyati’ Water Rights Task Force met with state parties on Dec. 3 to continue discussions on a possible water rights settlement after Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) requested the Department of Interior to organize the meeting in his Nov. 28 letter.

In the same letter to DOI Secretary Ken Salazar, the Nation maintained that it would be “in the best interest of the Nation to stand on the Position Statement adopted by the Naa’bik’iyati’ Committee.” The Committee passed resolution NABIN-87-12 so it could be presented to DOI during a Nov. 14 meeting.

The purpose of the meeting with the state parties was for Navajo Nation Leadership to meet and hear directly from the state parties on the issues outlined in the position statement (resolution NABIN-87-12).

Although the Interior was optimistic in their “Core Positions for a Near Term Settlement” it could negotiate a settlement that was favorable to some of the Nation’s positions, the meeting with the state parties clearly showed that the state parties were unwilling to compromise.

Some of the issues the state parties were unwilling to negotiate on included the delivery of 6,411 AFY of CAP to eastern Arizona Navajo communities without conditions, and the Secretary’s authority to take land into trust.

Navajo Nation leadership – eleven council delegates and Speaker Naize – and Hopi Tribal leadership, along with the DOI representatives, presented several priority issues that remain to be negotiating points between the state parties and the tribes.

The Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe were met with stark opposition to these points leaving the discussion at an impasse.

“It is without surprise that the various state parties would draw a firm line in the sand the way they did,” Speaker Naize stated. “I remain confident that we, as progressive neighbors, can continue to discuss these issues with practical progress.”

“I believe this type of discussion and baseline needed to be established – they heard directly from our leadership and we heard from them. Now, we can continue our work on this matter with greater clarity,” Speaker Naize added.

The Navajo Nation will continue to evaluate its options, and remains open to discussions with the Little Colorado River Water Rights Settlement stakeholders.

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